

## A Solid Framework by ominousrum

**Category:** Stranger Things (TV 2016)

**Genre:** F/M

**Language:** English

**Characters:** Billy Hargrove, Dustin Henderson, Eleven (Stranger Things), Jim "Chief" Hopper, Lucas Sinclair, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Mike Wheeler, Will Byers

**Relationships:** Dustin Henderson & Lucas Sinclair, Eleven & Jim "Chief" Hopper, Eleven/Mike Wheeler, Lucas Sinclair & Mike Wheeler, Maxine "Max" Mayfield/Lucas Sinclair, Will Byers & Eleven, Will Byers & Mike Wheeler

**Status:** Completed

**Published:** 2018-02-08

**Updated:** 2018-02-08

**Packaged:** 2022-04-21 15:01:16

**Rating:** Teen And Up Audiences

**Warnings:** No Archive Warnings Apply

**Chapters:** 1

**Words:** 1,601

**Publisher:** archiveofourown.org

**Summary:**

Mike sighed. He knew very well that El seemed to have her own opinion of Max, one formed before they were ever reunited. How, he still hadn't deciphered, but she ignored Max in every possible way.

## A Solid Framework

### Author's Note:

- For [amutemockingjay](#).

I really hope you like where I went with this story! I tried to include quite a few characters but I hope my characterization is on point.. Thank you for requesting this as a fic!

“Mike!” Lucas Sinclair was marching with a significant amount of purpose towards Mike Wheeler, bicycle in tow. The first quasi-warm spring Saturday had done nothing to tempt them away from the arcade, Mike and Dustin Henderson planning to coerce the rest of the gang to part with their bags of quarters. They’d radioed Lucas from Dustin’s place, but with no answer they’d biked back to the Wheeler house.

“Hey Lucas,” Mike nodded, catching Dustin slowly edging out of the way from the corner of his eye.

“What is your problem with Max?” Mike looked around confused, half expecting the girl in question to pop-up with a scowl.

“I don’t have a problem.”

“Yes, you *do*. And so does El, apparently.” Lucas threw his hands up in exasperation.

Mike sighed. He knew very well that El seemed to have her own opinion of Max, one formed before they were ever reunited. How, he still hadn’t deciphered, but she ignored Max in every possible way.

“I can’t speak for El. But I don’t have a problem with your girlfriend, okay?”

Lucas was taken aback for a moment at the use of the term. They hadn’t really spoken about defining things yet. “All you do is act like you resent the fact that she exists and that she wants to spend time with all of us.”

"I know it was like that at first but it's not anymore. It doesn't mean I have to be best friends with her," Mike stared at the ground, frown firmly set on his face.

"No one is saying you do," Lucas confirmed, glancing at Dustin before continuing, "but you should at least respect the opinion of *your* best friends."

Mike raised his eyes to take in the expression on Lucas' face.

"Like I did with you and El."

\*\*\*

A losing streak of ten games and the boys dragged themselves away from the arcade by noon and headed to Will Byer's house. They were all going to demolish Castle Byers and build a new one together, El planning on meeting them there. Too many frightening memories remained for Will to call it a safe place any longer; Joyce's worry placated when they confirmed the new location would be much closer to the house than the original.

The tension of the morning largely dissolved in favour of working as a cohesive unit, a softer, more familiar bickering sweeping through the group as they chose pieces of wood and scrap metal.

El ignored their nonsense in favour of sticking close to Will, their friendship having grown steadily since the two had finally met. El had an almost uncanny sense whenever Will's mind was spiralling back to the trauma he'd been through; she'd lay a gentle hand on his arm, quiet strength radiating from her. It made Mike smile every time.

The bickering fell into plenty of awkward silences when Max arrived with paint cans in hand; El's glaring from Will's side nearly audible itself. Mike managed to dodge most of Lucas' pointed looks in favour of painting every square inch of wood available. Dustin decided to describe every scene in *Ladyhawke* (mostly) in order as a diversionary tactic.

The finished product was definitely something to be proud of – sturdy and freshly painted at least six colours. Will had a new rainbow ship. The gang was all huge smiles and grand promises of the new castle housing their new D&D campaign. All smiles until Billy Hargrove showed up, that was.

“What’s this asshole doing here?” Dustin demanded, scowling as the teenager slammed the car door behind him. If looks could actually kill, Billy would be dead a thousand times over.

“Max! Get your dumb as fuck ass home.” He didn’t come close to the group, as much as his seething distaste for everyone there wanted him to. Max’s warning had kept him at bay, although it didn’t seem to prevent him from calling her a million nasty things at every given opportunity. Max sighed and brought a calming hand to Lucas’ shoulder, making sure to give him a farewell peck on the cheek before crossing the distance to Billy’s car.

“Who’s that?” El asked, watching the boys carefully.

“A sorry excuse for a human being.” Lucas deadpanned.

“A mouthbreather?” El had become rather fond of the expression. It was just unfortunate it could be applied to so many people.

“Worse.” Dustin said. El blanched at that.

“C’mon El, I’ll walk you back home,” Mike offered, one hand rolling his bicycle beside him, the other held out to grasp El’s. It was time they settled the matter of Max once and for all.

\*\*\*

Hopper grinned as he heard the familiar sound of El opening the door. “Hope you’re hungry, dinner will be ready in five.” He was by no means a gourmet cook, but the kid seemed to appreciate his stew and freshly baked bread, even if she considered it a step down from Eggos.

“I’ve been stupid,” El admitted, angry tears pricking at the corners of

her eyes as she flopped onto a kitchen chair.

Hopper immediately stiffened. The “Yeah?” in response not coming out as casually as he intended. He hoped to god he didn’t have to have a certain discussion with the Wheeler kid.

“About Max.”

Hopper raised his eyebrows as he pulled out a chair to sit opposite her. “Max...” He gave a small nod of recognition at the name – the new one, the redhead.

“I saw her and Mike when I left last year,” El gave him a contrite look, “at school.”

“Okay.” Hopper waited patiently for the other shoe to drop.

“They were laughing and smiling and I just-“ El balled her hands into fists and the window latches gave a faint rattle.

“Just what?”

“I knocked her down with my powers.”

Hopper chuckled softly. “Well that wasn’t very nice, but I can understand why instinct may have taken over for that one.”

“What do you mean?”

“Jealousy is a powerful emotion, kid.”

“Jealousy?” El furrowed her brows. The word itself felt like it coated her tongue in unpleasantness – she could only imagine what it described.

“It’s- it’s tricky to explain.” Hopper sighed. He did not really want to have these sorts of conversations. “You like Mike, right?”

El nodded.

“Well jealousy is what happens when you think the person you like likes someone or something more than they like you.”

El frowned, annoyed at herself. Mike had explained during their walk that he hadn't liked Max when she first tried to join their group – likening himself to how Lucas behaved towards her before they had become friends. Mike said he didn't want her to think Max was unwelcome, especially because she had stuck up for all of them and defended them against her brother. He said she should give Max a chance because she deserved one.

Hopper got up to turn the stove off, stomach growling at the smell of beef stew filling the air. He dished them each up a bowl and carried them back to the table.

"I was jealous," El accepted. "I didn't want Max to replace me."

"Replace you? Kid, I know for a fact all of those nerds you hang out with consider you irreplaceable."

"Irreplaceable..." El muttered.

"One of a kind." Hopper had wandered back to the kitchen to slice up some bread, bringing it and a slab of butter to rest in between them. He pushed up his sleeves, a hunk of bread finding its way into his mouth before he sat down.

"I just thought maybe they wanted a friend who wasn't so much trouble. Someone normal." Tears welled up in her eyes as she stared at the bowl in front of her.

"Hey, you listen to me kid—" Hopper got up from his seat to crouch down closer to his daughter, stern face at the ready. "You are amazing and smart and a hell of a lot kinder than most people in this world. That's better than normal in my books."

A small smile pulled at her lips as she picked up her spoon. Hopper gave her hair a ruffle before standing up to get back to his meal. It wasn't as easy this time around – he was more fearful of loss, of not being the kind of father she deserved. He supposed it was the same sort of feelings he'd had when his daughter was born, just amplified to an impossible degree. But sometimes he got things right.

"Hey," El whispered. Hopper looked up from his dinner to give her

his full attention. “You’re not like Papa.”

He couldn’t wipe the grin off his face as he ate a mouthful of stew.

“Can I call you Dad?” El chanced, voice low and uncertain. Hopper nearly choked on a piece of potato in surprise, hastily wiping his chin with his sleeve.

“I’d like that, kid.” Hopper managed once the coughing had subsided. They ate in relative silence for a few minutes, both smiling amongst bites of food.

“Oh and Dad?”

“Yeah?”

“Max’s brother beat up Lucas and Steve and he’s always calling her names. Thought you may want to know. As sheriff.”

Hopper narrowed his eyes. Joyce had mentioned she had a bad feeling about that boy when she saw him loitering after her shift once, but he’d never met him to confirm things for himself. Joyce *was* always right, though.

“Thanks, kid. I’ll see what we can do about making those sorts of things not happen again.”

No one was ever going to mess with his kid or the nerds his kid considered her friends.